DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 200 928 CS 006 021

AUTHOR Ciccone, F. Dawn
TITLE Reading Attitudes and Interests of Sixth Grade Pupils.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 40p.; M. A. Thesis, Kean College of New Jersey.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Females; Grade 6; Intermediate Grades; Males; *Reading Attitudes; Reading Instruction; *Reading Interests; Reading Materials; *Reading Material Selection; *Reading Research; *Recreational Reading

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to discover if the stated reading attitudes and interests of sixth grade students were relevant to their self-selected reading materials. Fifty students completed questionnaires concerning their reading attitudes and interests and used log sheets to record information about their self-selected reading materials. The results showed that in a nine-week period, boys read approximately 17 books while girls read approximately 24 books. The most popular subjects for boys were sports and cartoons/comics, and for girls fiction and cartoons/comics. The majority of the students reported that they preferred to choose their own reading materials as opposed to having someone else select those materials, and forty-one of the students regarded reading as a pleasurable activity. The findings indicate that student reading attitudes and interests are relevant to self-selected reading materials. (FL)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED200928

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

# READING ATTITUDES AND INTERESTS OF SIXTH GRADE PUPILS

by

F. Dawn Ciccone

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

F. Dawn Ciccone

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the Master of Arts degree in Education at
Kean College of New Jersey
April 1981

CS006027

TABLE OF CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iv |
| ABSTRACT | v |
| LIST OF TABLES | vi |
| READING ATTITUDES AND INTERESTS OF SIXTH GRADE PUPILS | |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM | 3 |
| SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM | 4 |
| HYPOTHESIS | 4 |
| DEFINITIONS | 4 |
| ASSUMPTIONS | 5 |
| LIMITATIONS | 5 |
| SAMPLE AND SPECIFIC PROCEDURES | 5 |
| RESULTS | 7 |
| CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS | 13 |
| PUPIL READING ATTITUDES AND INTERESTS: RELATED RESEARCH | |
| OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH TECHNIQUES | 17 |
| VIEW ON PUPIL ATTITUDES AND READING | 17 |
| PUPIL READING ATTITUDES AND SUCCESS | 18 |
| RELATED FACTORS IN READING ATTITUDES AND INTERESTS | 19 |
| READING ATTITUDES AND INTERESTS RELATED TO TEACHING | 26 |

Page

REFERENCES . . . . . 29

APPENDICES . . . . . 31

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher would like to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Albert J. Mazurkiewicz, seminar instructor, for his guidance and assistance in the preparation of this research project.

To all the sixth grade students who enthusiastically participated in this project, many thanks.

To my mother, who willingly sacrificed her leisure time to type this project, and has supported my graduate studies with devout encouragement and much understanding, special thanks with all my love.

## LIST OF TABLES


| Table | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| I. | Comparison of Stated Number of Books Read in One Month | 7 |
| II. | Actual Number of Books Read in One Month | 8 |
| III. | Actual Number of Books Read in Nine Week Period | 9 |
| IV. | Rank Order Preference of Types of Reading Materials | 10 |
| V. | Reading Interest Categories: Rank Order | 11 |
| VI. | Average Number of Hours Spent on Reading Per Week | 12 |
| VII. | Preference for Choosing Own Reading Materials | 13 |

> Today's children are tomorrow's adults, and the reading habits, interests, and tastes formed during childhood determine, to a great extent, the adult reading patterns of the future. Building a lasting interest in reading and developing an appetite for what is worth reading, are two objectives that have tremendous long-range significance. A good reading program must create the desire to read and help the individual to find pleasurable recreation in reading. (Harris, 1970:452)

In essence, Harris feels that teachers must counteract the attitude that reading is for school only. Harris (1970:452) maintains that a good reading program should "foster the desire to read for personal development, to learn more about the world, and to gain increasing understanding of people and society".

According to Tinker and McCullough (1975:309), a large proportion of children in the sixth to eighth grades have not acquired a lasting interest in reading. Tinker, McCullough, and Harris agree that a teacher's reading program must create a desire to read and help each pupil find pleasure and satisfaction in reading.

Much research, investigating reading preferences and interests, has been conducted through the years. Helen Robinson (1974:3) noted that over three hundred investigations of reading preferences were published before 1960, in the United States. Although reading interests is an area of study today, Robinson (1974) noted that the number of research studies, in reading interests, have declined.

Numerous researchers have also indicated that reading attitudes

relate to pupil success, overall. Reading programs that foster positive reading attitudes and genuine reading interests may promote positive adult reading habits.

Ruth Strang (1957) found that if a book or article has meaning, use, and purpose for the individual he will put forth the effort that reading demands. Therefore, a genuine interest in the material being read will motivate pupils to master basic skills and "foster a continuing interest in reading". Walter Barbe (1963) also maintains that in order for pupils to consider reading instruction successful, pupils must develop permanent interests in reading, along with skill mastery. Harris (1970:452) supports this idea when he asks, "Of what value is it to develop skillful readers, if the skill is used to little purpose in adult years?"

Researchers who have studied pupil attitudes in relation to reading and/or elementary subjects have presented such factors as: age, grade level, sex, sex differences, geographic location, social class, socio-economic status, and types of reading materials in their studies.

Tom Haladyna and Greg Thomas examined the attitudes of elementary school pupils in relation to grade level, sex, and region. The Haladyna-Thomas study (1977) revealed numerous findings: Elementary pupil attitudes tend to be less positive as pupils move through grade levels; therefore, a serious decline in attitude toward school and school matters was noted. In analyzing school subjects, social studies was the area held in lowest regard by the pupils. Reading attitudes dropped a bit and then leveled off. As for sex differences, boys were more negative about school overall than girls; yet the greatest differences were noted with Physical Education, Music, and Science. Haladyna maintained that

since pupil attitudes have been declining, instructional programs must promote affective education, for attitudes and learning are related.

The Neilsen study (1977) noted that students reading above grade placement had a more positive reading attitude than did students reading at or below grade level. Neilsen also stated that "humans like to do what they do well". Therefore, it is important to have teachers work with students so that they can find interesting reading materials whereby students can read successfully. The Neilsen study also found that home environment had a significant influence on pupil attitudes toward reading.

The Hall study indicated that social class and sex were not reliable determiners of how students feel about reading. However, this study did find a significant correlation between reading attitudes and achievement. Hall (1978:9) stated that "when ability improves, attitude often improves and when attitude improves, ability often improves". Accordingly, Hall maintained that teachers should be concerned with teaching reading skills and improving children's reading attitudes, without reflecting on social class or sex biases.

It is apparent that further research relating to reading attitudes and interests is needed.

## Statement of the Problem

In consideration of past research findings and implications, as well as the idea of providing additional insight and information concerning reading attitudes and interests, it was the purpose of this study to survey the stated reading attitudes and interests of sixth grade students and compare these with interests reflected in self-selected reading materials.

## Significance of the Problem

Teachers are often unaware of student attitudes toward and interests in reading. A study of this nature should be of significance to the teacher in helping to guide student reading experiences and making them more pleasurable. Research has indicated that students enjoy working in areas where they are achieving success. Therefore, a student who is genuinely excited about reading should be encouraged to explore the world of print to "foster a continuing interest in reading" (Strang, 1957). Teachers having insight into student reading attitudes and interests can develop reading programs to promote more positive attitudes toward reading, as well as the likelihood that students will read voluntarily for information and/or pleasure.

## Hypothesis

The purpose of this study was to survey the reading attitudes and interests of sixth grade pupils. It was hypothesized that pupil reading attitudes and interests are relevant to self-selected reading materials.

## Definitions

Reading Attitude is defined as a system of feelings related to reading which influence a student to approach or avoid a reading situation.

Reading Interest is defined as the element of self-involvement without pressure from outside; a spontaneous acceptance and an inner recognition of the appropriate (Spache, 1970).

Stated Reading Interests are defined as the categories of reading that the students state as their preferences, determined through questionnaire responses.

## Assumptions

For the purposes of this study, it was assumed that the questionnaire utilized was valid and reliable; and that pupils responded earnestly to the items in the questionnaire. With an explanation of the Likert Scale, it was assumed that pupils recorded the number that corresponded with their true feelings regarding questionnaire items. It was assumed that pupils are rarely given the opportunity to select printed materials that they are genuinely interested in reading. Pupils of both sexes need positive reading models in the home and school environment; therefore it was assumed that students could develop positive reading attitudes, given the proper environment.

## Limitations

This study was limited by the brief time allotment to collect relevant data; as well as the number of students (fifty) at the sixth grade level. This study was also limited, in that the researcher relied on the stated reading attitudes and interests of the students.

## Sample and Specific Procedures

A sample of fifty sixth grade students, which included twenty-two boys and twenty-eight girls from two-sixth grade homerooms, were the subjects for this study. All subjects attended the same public, elementary school (K-6) in an urban area of central New Jersey.

The following information pertains to specific procedures of this study. Initially, a questionnaire was administered to each sixth grade student to determine his/her reading attitudes and interests. Before

recording their responses, students were asked to listen to an explanation of the Likert Scale with a range of numbers from one to seven. All questions on the Likert Scale were answered prior to the recording of any numbers. The questionnaire was made by the researcher, and contained twenty different items. See Appendix A. Some items consisted of numerous sub-parts, while others required only one response. To assess pupil reading interests, pupils were asked to rate sixteen categories using the Likert Scale. The interest categories used were as follows: Adventure Stories, Animals, Cartoons/Comics, Career Books, Fairy Tales and Fables, Famous People, Fiction, Geography/History, Hobbies and "How To" Books, Humor, Mysteries, Poetry, Romantic Stories, Science and Nature, Science Fiction, and Sports. Ten of the categories represented fictional categories while the remaining six denoted non-fiction. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the interest categories were discussed to insure clarity in rating the categories. The researcher clarified the pupils' questions as they were raised, while pupils completed the questionnaire. Pupils were asked to rate all the items honestly.

Students were asked to record their self-selected reading materials on a pupil log sheet, designed by the researcher, for a nine week period during the time interval of November to January. See Appendix B. The information requested on the log sheets included: book titles, authors, type of reading materials (i.e. hard cover books, soft paperbacks, magazines, newspapers, comics, books with illustrations), and interest categories. Pupils submitted their log sheets to the researcher on a weekly basis. An explanation of the varied types of reading materials,

as well as the interest categories, was given to the pupils prior to the distribution of each Log Sheet, to avoid pupil misunderstandings.

At the end of the nine week period, the researcher analyzed each pupil log sheet in relation to the questionnaire responses, so that comparisons could be made between stated reading attitudes and interests, and self-selected reading materials; number of materials read as compared to number of (stated) books read monthly, and age and/or sex differences related to pupil attitudes and interests.

## Results

The results shown in Tables one, two, and three pertain to the number of books read by boys as compared to girls. Table one specifically compared the "stated" number of pleasure books read in one month.

Table I

Comparison of Stated Number of

Books Read in One Month

| Subjects | Range (least to most) | Mean | S.D. | t |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BOYS | 1 - 24 | 6.04 | 5.07 | .52* |
| GIRLS | 3 - 25 | 6.78 | 4.70 | |

*Insignificant difference.

The stated number of books read by boys ranged from one to twenty-four, while the stated number of books read by girls ranged from three to twenty-five. To determine the statistical significance of the mean differences the researcher used a t-test for an uneven sample of less

than thirty since the sample consisted of twenty-two boys and twenty-eight girls. The test measurement of .52 revealed an insignificant difference between the stated number of books read by boys and girls. Table one indicated that the boys and girls in the study stated that they read approximately the same number of books in a one month period according to their responses in the pupil questionnaires.

Table two shows a comparison of the "actual" number of pleasure books read by boys and girls in a one month period.

Table II

Actual Number of Books Read

in One Month

| Subjects | Range (least to most) | Mean | S.D. | t |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BOYS | 3 - 18 | 8.68 | 4.06 | 2.34* |
| GIRLS | 5 - 19 | 11.64 | 4.00 | |

*Significant difference

In one month, the number of books read by the boys in the study ranged from three to eighteen; while the number of books read by the girls ranged from five to nineteen. The test result of 2.34 indicated a significant difference in the mean number of books read by boys and girls, with the girls' sample reading almost 3 more books in this period.

Table three shows the comparison of the total number of pleasure books read during the nine week survey period.

Table III

Actual Number of Books Read

in Nine Week Period

| Subjects | Range (least to most) | Mean | S.D. | t |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BOYS | 7 - 34 | 17.22 | 14.00 | 3.41* |
| GIRLS | 15 - 39 | 23.92 | 6.23 | |

*Significant difference

The number of books read by the boys in the survey ranged from seven to thirty-four, while the number of books read by the girls ranged from fifteen to thirty-nine. The mean for the boys was 17.22 books in the nine week period. The mean for the girls was 23.92 books in the nine week period. The results in Table three revealed a mean difference of 6.70 books. The test result of 3.41 indicated a very significant difference in the actual number of books read by the boys as compared to the girls in the sample.

In comparing the questionnaire items on types of reading materials to the types of materials listed in the pupil log sheets, similar results were revealed as shown in Table four.

Table IV

Rank Order Preference of

Types of Reading Materials

| BOYS | GIRLS |
|---|---|
| *Soft, Paperback Books | *Soft, Paperback Books |
| Hard Cover Books | Hard Cover Books |
| Comics | Books with Pictures |
| Books with Pictures | Comics |
| Magazines | Magazines |
| Newspapers | Newspapers |

* = most popular type of reading material

Table four rank orders the types of reading materials from the most popular down to the least popular type of reading materials. Both groups in the sample preferred soft paperback books to the others. Both groups least preferred newspapers as pleasure reading material. The two most preferred types of materials included soft, paperback books and hard cover books. The girls in the sample preferred books with pictures to comics; though the preference was minimal. The boys preferred comics to books with pictures, though the preference was due to a difference of one selection. Table four reveals that there is no significant difference between the preferences of varied types of reading materials for boys and girls.

The next comparison revealed differences in reading interest categories for boys and girls. The results in Table five show the reading interest categories in rank order from most preferred to least preferred.

Table V

Reading Interest Categories:

Rank Order

| ORDER | BOYS | ORDER | GIRLS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sports | 1 | Fiction |
| 2 | Cartoons/Comics | 2 | Cartoons/Comics |
| 3 | Famous People | 3 | Fairy Tales/Fables |
| 4 | Fairy Tales/Fables | 4 | Famous People |
| 5 | Hobbies; How To Books | 5 | Hobbies; How To Books |
| 6 | Science & Nature | 6 | Humor |
| 7 | Fiction | 7 | Animals |
| 8 | Humor | 8 | Mysteries |
| 9 | Geography/History | 9 | Geography/History |
| 10 | Adventure | 10 | Adventure |
| 11 | Mysteries | 11 | Career Books |
| 12 | Animals | 12 | Romantic Stories |
| 13 | Science Fiction | 13 | Science & Nature |
| 14 | Career Books | 14 | Sports |
| 15 | Poetry | 15 | Poetry |
| 16 | Romantic Stories | 16 | Science Fiction |

The data indicates diverse interests in reading overall. Both groups ranked Cartoons/Comics highly and read numerous selections in that category. Poetry is disliked by both groups. The girls and boys selected the categories of Cartoons/Comics, Famous People, Fairy Tales/Fables, Hobbies/How To Books consistently over the remaining categories. The most preferred interest category for the boys was Sports, while the most preferred category for the girls was Fiction. As far as the least preferred category, the boys never selected Romantic Stories, while the girls rarely selected Science Fiction books (only three selections were made in the nine week survey). In comparing individual pupil log sheets with questionnaire items on interest categories, the results were positive overall. Most pupils in the survey read books in interest

categories most preferred by them. The boys consistently made selections in the interest category of Sports and the girls selected Fiction books most frequently.

To assess pupil attitudes toward reading, items 4, 5, 6, 11, 13, and 14 in the pupil questionnaires were compared in that these items dealt with reading as a free time hobby and whether or not pupils regarded reading as boring. Forty-one pupils (including 17 boys and 24 girls) stated that they enjoyed reading in their free time and that they felt reading was not boring. Nine pupils (including 5 boys and 4 girls) stated that they did not enjoy reading in their free time or responded with a neutral response. These pupils also stated that reading to them was boring or that they had neutral feelings as to whether or not they considered reading a boring activity.

The results in Table six show comparisons of the average amount of time spent on reading per week.

Table VI

Average Number of Hours

Spent on Reading Per Week

| | None | 1-2-Hours | 3-4 Hours | 4-5 Hours | More than 5 Hours |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BOYS | 0 | 14 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| GIRLS | 0 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Total # of Pupils | 0 | 24 | 7 | 11 | 8 |

Table six indicated that most pupils in the sample spend

approximately one to two hours reading per week, on the average. The table also revealed that some of the girls in the sample spent more hours reading per week than the boys, indicated in the last three columns of the table.

A final comparison, in the survey, pertained to whether or not pupils in the sixth grade prefer choosing their own books for pleasure.

Table VII

Preference for Choosing

Own Reading Materials

| | Yes, prefer choosing their own books | Yes, but also enjoy having others choose for them | No, prefer others to choose books for them |
|---|---|---|---|
| BOYS | 17 | 4 | 1 |
| GIRLS | 19 | 9 | 0 |
| TOTALS | 36 | 13 | 1 |

The majority of sixth grade pupils prefer choosing their own reading materials (36 pupils responded yes out of 50 total pupils). Thirteen pupils in addition also responded yes, however, they also enjoy having others select books for them as well. One pupil responded no, in that he preferred others to choose books for him.

## Conclusions and Implications

The results of this survey support the hypothesis that pupil reading attitudes and interests are relevant to self-selected reading materials. Tables four, five, and seven specifically indicate the types of reading

materials preferred, the reading interest categories preferred, and the idea of self-selected reading materials as opposed to others selecting reading materials for pupils. The majority of pupils in this survey self-selected reading materials in interest categories they most preferred, which implies that self-selection of materials in interest categories most preferred may be a motivational key in promoting positive attitudes toward reading.

Tables one, two, and three compared the number of books read by boys and girls in the survey. The t-test used in Tables two and three revealed significant differences in the number of books read by boys as compared to girls in one month, and nine weeks, respectively. An insignificant difference was derived in comparing the stated number of books read by boys and girls. These results suggested that the boys and girls in the survey estimated a similar number of books per month, however in actuality, the sixth grade girls read more books than the boys. A comparison of the number of hours spent on reading revealed that the boys and girls tend to spend 1-2 hours on pleasure reading per week; however, more girls spend a greater number of hours reading per week than the boys. This would account for the larger mean number of books read by the girls as compared to the boys.

In assessing pupil reading attitudes, the results revealed that 41 of 50 pupils regard reading as a pleasurable free-time activity and, in addition, do not regard reading as boring; only nine pupils regarded reading in a neutral or negative way. A similar survey of this type would be interesting and insightful if the neutral/negative viewers were questioned as to how they could view reading more positively.

Implied in these findings is the necessity and value of a pupil questionnaire to assess pupil attitudes and interests toward reading. Educators could incorporate pupil results in reading programs and in the guidance and promotion of positive reading habits. Self-selection of reading materials is, in addition, another important aspect in building pupil reading attitudes and interests positively, though each pupil should be recognized as an individual. Some pupils may prefer the guidance of another in selecting reading materials and it is to the teacher's advantage to accept this possibility and work with pupils accordingly.

Though the girls read a greater number of books than the boys overall, it should not be concluded that all girls read a greater number of books than boys in that other variables may be related: past reading experiences, amount of free time, number of responsibilities at home and in school, availability of reading materials, etc. It is also possible, that our society needs to promote positive male models for reading purposes. All pupils need positive reading models set before them to show in a genuine, natural way the essence, importance, and recreation of reading.

The use of pupil log sheets may also be enlightening for teachers in exposing pupils to varied reading materials and enriching pupil reading experiences. An on-going process such as this may encourage pupil reading attitudes and interests to grow positively on an individual basis, as well as by sharing pupil logs with partners or groups.

**Pupil Reading Attitudes and Interests:**

**Related Research**

Research on pupil attitudes toward reading exists on a smaller scale, as compared to the amount of research investigating pupil reading interests. Few studies have incorporated the areas of reading attitudes and interests concomitantly. More research in this overall area could enlighten parents and educators in developing pupil reading attitudes and interests more positively.

## Overview of Research Techniques

Numerous research techniques have been used to determine and identify reading attitudes and/or interests. These include observation checklists, surveys, personal interviews, questionnaires, logs, diaries, and inventories (Robinson and Weintraub, 1973). According to Alexander and Filler (1976), teacher observations and observation checklists are worthwhile measurement devices. Sylvia Carter (1976:1) notes that the interview/questionnaire is the "most prevalent tool used in assessing interests".

## Views On Pupil Attitudes and Reading

Albert J. Harris feels that teachers must counteract the attitude that reading is for school only. Harris (1970:452) maintained that a good reading program should "foster the desire to read for personal development, to learn more about the world, and to gain increasing understanding of people and society".

Thomas Estes (1971) noted that the attitudes a child has toward reading are as important as the child's ability to read. Estes stated, "the value of reading ability lies in its use rather than its possession" (1971:135). Accordingly, Estes devised an attitude scale similar to the Likert scale.

Heathington and Alexander purport that observation is of primary importance in assessing children's attitudes toward reading. "Children's behaviors and comments can be viewed over a period of time and in many reading situations, providing the teacher with insight into how children feel about reading in various situations" (Heathington and Alexander, 1978:769). After interviewing sixty children in grades one to six, Heathington and Alexander summarized the comments according to positive and negative attitudes. These responses were used in constructing a quick ten item checklist for teachers to use, while observing children's behaviors in reading situations.

## Pupil Reading Attitudes and Success

Numerous researchers have indicated that reading attitudes relate to pupil success overall. Reading programs that foster positive reading attitudes and genuine reading interests may promote positive adult reading habits.

Paul Witty (1950) observed many cases of school failure at Northwestern University and concluded that failure in reading could not be attributed to a single factor. In studying a group of one hundred boys and girls who were poor readers, Witty found that lack of interest in reading accounted for 82% of the school failures, while indifference to reading contributed to 44% of the failures, and dislike for reading was

evident in 43% of the poor readers studied. Witty stated that stress overall impairs learning (1950:509).

Ruth Strang (1957) found that if a book or article has meaning, use, and purpose for the individual he will put forth the effort that reading demands. Therefore, a genuine interest in the material being read will motivate pupils to master basic skills and "foster a continuing interest in reading". Walter Barbe (1963) also maintains that in order for pupils to consider reading instruction successful, pupils must develop permanent interests in reading, along with skill mastery. Harris (1970:452) supports this idea when he asks, "Of what value is it to develop skillful readers, if the skill is used to little purpose in adult years?"

According to Tinker and McCullough (1975:309), a large proportion of children in the sixth to eighth grades have not acquired a lasting interest in reading. Tinker, McCullough, and Harris agree that a teacher's reading program must create a desire to read and help each pupil find pleasure and satisfaction in reading.

## Related Factors in Reading Attitudes and Interests

Researchers who have studied pupil attitudes and/or interests in relation to reading and/or elementary subjects, have presented such factors as: age, grade level, sex, sex differences, geographic location, social class, socio-economic status, teacher attitudes and practices, and types of reading materials in their studies.

J. Estill Alexander and Ronald Claude Filler researched reading attitudes in relation to intelligence, sex, socio-economic level, teacher's attitudes, and instruction. Their report to the International

Reading Association in 1976 yielded contradictory results. Alexander and Filler cautioned educators against assuming that more intelligent students will have more positive attitudes toward reading than less intelligent students; that girls will have more positive attitudes toward reading than boys; and that students from lower socio-economic levels will have a more negative attitude toward reading as compared to students from higher levels (1976:13-15). Alexander and Filler did find, however, that the teacher's attitudes, beliefs, and practices were relevant to pupil attitudes toward reading.

Tom Haladyna and Greg Thomas examined the attitudes of elementary school pupils in relation to grade level, sex, and region. The Haladyna-Thomas study (1977) revealed numerous findings: Elementary pupil attitudes tend to be less positive as pupils move through grade levels; therefore, a serious decline in attitude toward school and school matters was noted. In analyzing school subjects, social studies was the area held in lowest regard by the pupils. Reading attitudes dropped a bit and then leveled off. As for sex differences, boys were more negative about school overall than girls; yet the greatest differences were noted with Physical Education, Music, and Science. Haladyna maintained that since pupil attitudes have been declining, instructional programs must promote affective education, for attitudes and learning are related.

The Neilsen study (1977) noted that students reading above grade placement had a more positive reading attitude than did students reading at or below grade level. Neilsen also stated that "humans like to do what they do well". Therefore, it is important to have teachers work

with students so that they can find interesting reading materials whereby students can read successfully. The Neilsen study also found that home environment had a significant influence on pupil attitudes toward reading.

The Hall study indicated that social class and sex were not reliable determiners of how students feel about reading. However, this study did find a signfficant correlation between reading attitudes and achievement. Hall (1978:9) stated that "when ability improves, attitude often improves and when attitude improves, ability often improves". Accordingly, Hall maintained that teachers should be concerned with teaching reading skills and improving children's reading attitudes, without reflecting on social class or sex biases.

Researchers who have investigated the relationship between age and reading interests derived varied results. In 1951, Sister Mary Edith and Sister Mary Amatora conducted a four year analysis of the amount of free reading done, and the interests of seven hundred and twenty-four elementary children in varied grade levels. The results of this study showed an increase in free reading, from ages 7 to 10, along with a slight increase in the amount of free reading from ages 12 to 13. "This agrees with the findings of Terman and Lima, who state that the peak is reached at the twelfth and thirteenth years" (1951:569). The authors noted that the amount of free reading for girls was larger than for boys. Primary children showed much interest in stories about children, animals, and fairies. With increased age level there was an increase in interest level in science and history stories. Twelve and thirteen year old children showed a significant increase in interest in stories of

adventure. "Interest in fiction increased with age level" (1951:569).

Edna Furness presented numerous results of reading interest studies. She concluded that "age is influential in governing boy/girl reading interests in the elementary grades, and that sex is a dominating factor from the fifth grade on" (1963:3). Furness noted that little differences existed in examining the results of reading preferences for superior, average, and low level pupils. Furness cited May Lazar (1937) who reported signficant sex differences in children's self-selected books in Lazar's early study.

Geeslin and Wilson investigated the effects of reading age on reading interests. Their study included 30 eight year old pupils, and 30 twelve year old pupils who were involved in choosing between pairs of books. The subjects' reading ages were between ten and eleven years, measured by the Gates Reading Survey - Form 1. According to Geeslin and Wilson, there was no evidence that members of either chronological age group were more influenced by reading age than by chronological age; or that boys of either age group or on any grade level made a significantly greater number of book choices in relation to chronological or reading age (1972:755).

The Beta Upsilon Chapter of Pi Lambda Theta conducted an informal study of children's reading interests with 811 subjects between the ages of 7 and 12. The subjects filled out reading interest forms, and their responses were analyzed by Carol Lauritzen and Deborah Cheves. The responses within the age and sex groups were analyzed by content (1974:694). The results indicated that most children liked the books because of content; and plot was mentioned more by girls than boys.

Girls of all ages noted a greater interest in people. Older children were more critical than younger children. Overall, animals were the most favored content in all age groups, with a decreasing interest in ages 11 and 12. Boys indicated a greater interest in science, sports, and transportation, while girls at all age levels favored people and make-believe.

Chiu (1973) designed a study to investigate children's reading preferences in relation to sex and reading ability. The method of pair comparisons was employed to construct a 45 item questionnaire covering ten categories of books (1973:369). The questionnaire was presented to 99 fourth graders in a forced choice manner. Chiu's results showed that boy/girl reading preferences differed. Boys ranked sports as the top reading category while girls ranked mystery as their top category. It was also noted that reading ability as judged by teachers was unrelated to reading preferences. Chiu (1973:372) stated that:

> ... children become better readers by reading materials of interest to them. The information of reading preferences for boys and girls may help teachers in meeting the challenge "to get the right books to the right persons".

Much research includes data on types of reading materials in relation to reading preferences. Reading materials include books (hardcover, soft paperback, illustrated and non-illustrated), magazines, newspapers, and comics.

Scharf (1973) noted that males preferred newspapers and magazines, while females preferred books and the borrowing and purchasing of materials. As far as interest categories, males preferred reading about sports, war, crime, biographies, articles, and essays. Females

preferred poetry, drama, autobiographies, and novels. Magazine preferences included homemaking, romance, and movies. Overall, paperback books were preferred moreso than hard-cover books (1973:665-6).

In reviewing earlier studies, Witty noted that boys more frequently turned to magazines than did girls; and boys preferred detective and mystery stories while girls selected "general story-types" (1960:542). Witty and Kopel (1938) noted that periodicals were popular in all grade levels above grade two. Lazar (1937) and Peterson (1955) found that newspaper reading was included in reading preferences, with the comic strip sections ranking highest.

Geraldine Moray reviewed numerous studies to ascertain the reading interests of pupils in the intermediate grades. Moray cites Langer (1970) in reviewing comic strip preferences. Langer administered a questionnaire to 264 fourth and fifth graders classified as high and low achievers. Overall, pupils agreed that the stories they enjoyed most were those that contained some humor. Langer suggested that if pupils (especially low achievers) are interested in books with comic strip formats, teachers should use these materials to build reading foundations upon (Langer in Moray, 1978:764). Moray also cited George Norvell (1966) on magazine preferences. Norvell conducted a study with 6,000 children in grades 3 through 6. Each child was asked to rank a list of magazines according to their interests. The boys ranked three adult magazines as most preferred out of a total of four top magazines, while the girls ranked one adult magazine as most preferred. Magazines designed for boys and girls were ranked higher by the girls than the boys (Norvell in Moray, 1978:765). Overall, Norvell's study supported the idea that boys and girls differ in

reading interests.

Moray concludes that intermediate reading programs cannot be limited to textbooks and basals.

> Teachers must provide their students with a wide variety of attractive reading materials including newspapers, paperbacks, and magazines. Perhaps if children in grades four through six were allowed more time to read about subjects that are of interest to them rather than drill and watered down material that appears in many "readers", they would not only be able to read but they would read more often (1978:768).

Bouchard (1971), Martin (1972), Meisel and Glass (1970) agree with Moray that most basals seem to be weak in providing the types of stories preferred by intermediate pupils (Moray, 1978:763).

Though much research exists in reading interests and story preferences, the findings are quite diversified. George Norvell (1958) investigated the "significance of certain elements in determining the popularity of reading materials" (Moray, 1978:543). Norvell's study involved more than 24,000 New York children in grades 3 to 6. Norvell designated the results of his study as favorable reading elements for boys and girls, as well as unfavorable reading elements for boys and girls, as follows:

> Elements favorable to reading for boys included: adventurous action; physical struggle, human characters; animals; humor; courage and heroism; patriotism. The following unfavorable elements were cited: description; didacticism; fairies, romantic love, sentiment; girls or women as leading characters; and physical weakness in male characters.
>
> Girls favored the following items: lively adventure; home and school life; human characters; domestic animals and pets; romantic love; sentiment; mystery; the supernatural; and patriotism. And the following items were disapproved: violent action,

> description, didacticism; boys and girls younger than the reader (except babies) and fierce animals (Norvell in Moray, 1978:543).

Wolfson examined the expressed reading interests of boys and girls in Connecticut. Her 1960 study included approximately 2,000 boys and girls in grades 3 to 6. Wolfson administered reading interest inventories orally, and parents provided necessary background information in the questionnaires. Wolfson examined twelve reading categories and found that there were significant differences in the boys choices, as compared to the girls choices; with the exception of the social studies category. Many categories revealed overlapping interests for boys and girls. Though no particular category seemed to appeal to one sex over another, boys expressed interest in more categories than girls (1960:82).

Researchers maintain that the mere accumulations of reading interests data are insignificant unless researchers and educators incorporate the findings in reading programs. Weintraub (1960:659) stated that:

> Studies of interests and preferences must be viewed from the standpoint of the methods employed. Research findings are to a large extent influenced by the particular research techniques employed.

Weintraub notes that there is a wide range of reading interests and preferences of children. Accordingly, Weintraub feels it is essential that each teacher identify the unique reading interests of children in the classroom, and make some effort to supply the materials that fill these unique desires (1960:659).

## Reading Attitudes and Interests Related to Teaching

Walter Barbe stresses the importance of the interest factor in reading instruction. Barbe maintained that the primary goal of every

teacher must be the development of permanent reading interests. Barbe notes that today there is great emphasis on reading skills and a lack of emphasis on fostering reading interests. According to Barbe, reading interests can and should be encouraged through the self-selection of reading materials.

> The great increase in interest in individualized or personalized reading instruction has resulted from the realization that the interest approach to teaching reading is highly effective.... From a practical point of view, allowing children to select reading materials of their own presents some expected problems. These problems, however, instead of being disadvantages actually can be turned into teaching aids (1963:488).

Pupil reading interests are relevant to teacher attitudes toward reading. "The teacher who is not interested in reading, or who does not find time to read, can hardly be expected to develop an interest in reading on the part of her children" (1963:489). Barbe summarized the importance of reading interests with the following statements:

> The final goal of reading instruction must be a love of both the "process and the results" of reading. This can be acquired only when the child has developed meaningful, lifelong interests in reading. Irrespective of his reading grade level, the more intangible and less easily measured depth of his interest in reading is more important (1963:490).

Virgil Howes stresses the importance of interest as a key factor in successful learning. In reviewing numerous studies of reading interests, Howes states that the amount and quality of reading are related to the number and kinds of books, magazines, and newspapers found in the home; the family socio-economic level; and the education, occupation, and leisure-time pursuits of parents (1963:491). Howes maintained that pupil interests are relevant to pupil attitudes in reading. Utilization of "reading materials with a high level of interest can certainly help to

build favorable reading attitudes" (1963:495). Howes notes that a child's reading attitude has a vital influence on his reading success, at present and in the future. In summation, Howes feels parents and educators should capitalize on reading interests to develop, modify and/or change reading attitudes in a more positive way.

> A teacher with information on reading attitudes and interests of individual children can adjust her teaching to make reading experiences door openers for limitless opportunities for pupil growth.
>
> The full use of the interest factor means that teachers not only build upon present interests but work actively to develop and extend interests. Some interests may be transitory and unworthy of extension; others may need to be broadened and deepened. But the teacher who, through a continuous process, identifies, uses, stimulates, cultivates, and to some degree protects interests, acts best to promote efficient learning (1963:495-6).

## REFERENCES


Alexander, J. Estill and Ronald Claude Filler. "Attitudes and Reading", Reading Aids Series. International Reading Association, Newark, Delaware, 1976, ED 126 491.

Barbe, Walter B. "Interests and the Teaching of Reading", Education, April, 1963, p. 486.

Beta Upsilon Chapter, Pi Lambda Theta. "Children's Reading Interests Classified by Age Level", Reading Teacher, 27, (April, 1974), pp. 694-700.

Bush, Clifford L. and Andrews, Robert C., dictionary of reading and learning disability. Los Angeles, California: Western Psychological Services, 1978, p. 110.

Carter, Sylvia. "An Investigation of Reading Interests of Children", Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association, (20th, Miami, October 20-23, 1976), ED 130 254.

Chiu, Lian-Hwang. "Reading Preferences of Fourth Grade Children Related to Sex and Reading Ability", The Journal of Educational Research. 66, Number 8, (April, 1973) pp. 369-373.

Edith, Sister Mary and Sister Mary Amatora. "The Age Factor in Children's Interests in Free Reading", Education, 71, Part 2, (May, 1951), pp. 567-571.

Estes, Thomas H. "A Scale to Measure Attitudes Toward Reading", Journal of Reading, 15 (November, 1971), pp. 135-8.

Geeslin, Dorine H. and Richard C. Wilson. "Effect of Reading Age on Reading Interests", Elementary English, 49, (May 1972), pp. 750-756.

Haladyna, Tom and Thomas, Greg. "The Attitude of Elementary School Children Toward School and Subject Matters", A paper presented to American Educational Research Association. New York, New York, April 4-8, 1977.

Hall, Diane S. "The Relationship of Reading Attitudes to Achievement, Sex and Social Class Among Fifth Grade Pupils". A paper presented to the International Reading Association, Houston, Texas, May 1-5, 1978.

Harris, Albert J. How To Increase Reading Ability: New York, New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 5th Edition, 1970, pp. 452-479.

Heathington, Betty S. and J. Estill Alexander. "A Child-Based Observation Checklist to Assess Attitudes Toward Reading", The Reading Teacher, 31, (April, 1978), pp. 769-771.

Howes, Virgil M. "Children's Interests - A Keynote for Teaching Reading", Education. April 1963, pp. 491-496.

Moray, Geraldine. "What Does Research Say About the Reading Interests of Children in the Intermediate Grades?" The Reading Teacher. Vol. 31, April, 1978, pp. 763-768.

Neilsen, Penny J. "Attitude Toward Reading and Reading Related Concepts Among Elementary Students". A paper presented to the National Reading Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, December 1-3, 1977.

Robinson, Helen M. and Samuel Weintraub. "Research Related to Children's Interests and to Developmental Values of Reading", Library Trends, 22 (October, 1973), pp. 81-108.

Scharf, Anne G. "Who Likes What in High School", Journal of Reading, 16 (May, 1963), pp. 604-607.

Spache, George D. Good Reading for Poor Readers. Champaign, Illinois: Garrard Publishing Co., 1970, p. 2.

Strang, Ruth. "Interest as a Dynamic Force in the Improvement of Reading", Elementary English, 34:171, March, 1957.

Tinker, Miles A. and McCullough, Constance M. Teaching Elementary Reading. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 4th Edition, 1975, pp. 309-339.

Weintraub, Samuel. "Research: Children's Reading Interests", Reading Teacher, 22, No. 7, (April, 1969), pp. 655-659.

Witty, Paul. "Interest and Success --- The Antidote to Stress:, Elementary English, 32, (December, 1955), pp. 507-513.

_____ and Associates. "Studies of Children's Interest - A Brief Summary", Elementary English, (December, 1960), pp. 540-545, 572.

Wolfson, Bernice J. "What Do Children Say Their Reading Interests Are?" The Reading Teacher, 14 (November, 1960), pp. 81-2.

APPENDIX A Questionnaire

Name:

Age: Sex:

Directions: Answer the items on this questionnaire honestly. Place a number before each item, using these numbers:

7 - Strongly Agree

6 - Agree

5 - Tend to Agree

4 - Neutral

3 - Tend to disagree

2 - Disagree

1 - Strongly Disagree

1. I like to read books about...

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ Adventure Stories | _____ Hobbies, "How To" Books |
| _____ Animals | _____ Humor (Jokes, etc.) |
| _____ Cartoons/Comics | _____ Mysteries |
| _____ Career Books | _____ Poetry |
| _____ Fairy Tales, Fables | _____ Romantic Stories |
| _____ Famous People | _____ Science & Nature |
| _____ Fiction | _____ Science Fiction |
| _____ Geography/History | _____ Sports |

2. I prefer the main character to be...

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ boy or man (male) | _____ girl or woman (female) |

3. I usually get books from...

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ town library | _____ book stores |
| _____ school library | _____ parents |
| _____ classrooms | _____ home |
| _____ book clubs | _____ friends |

4. _____ I like to read books in my free time.

5. _____ I like to read magazines in my free time.

6. _____ I like to read poetry.

7. My favorite type of poetry is about:

_____ animals
_____ holidays
_____ humorous things
_____ nature
_____ people
_____ places

8. I prefer reading materials that are:

_____ hard cover books
_____ soft, paperback books
_____ magazines
_____ newspapers
_____ comics
_____ books with illustrations

9. _____ I prefer reading materials that I choose myself.

10. _____ I prefer reading materials that others choose for me.

11. _____ During my free time, I would rather read than do anything else.

12. _____ I talk to my friends about books I have read.

13. _____ Reading is boring.

14. _____ I enjoy reading in school.

15. _____ I enjoy doing book projects after I read books.

Directions: Check the answer that tells how often you read for pleasure, and how often your parents read for pleasure.

16. How much time do you spend on reading for pleasure each week?

_____ None
_____ 1-2 hours
_____ 3-4 hours
_____ 4-5 hours
_____ More than 5 hours

17. My parents read books for pleasure...

_____ often
_____ sometimes
_____ never

Directions: Read the next three questions and honestly answer each question. Write your answers on the line.

18. How many books do you usually read for pleasure in a month?
_____ books

19. Name your favorite book (if you have one).

_____

20. Name your favorite magazine (if you have one).

_____

## Pupil Log Sheet

Name: Date:

Title:

Author:

Type of Reading Material:

Interest Category:

Title:

Author:

Type of Reading Material:

Interest Category:

Title:

Author:

Type of Reading Material:

Interest Category:

Title:

Author:

Type of Reading Material:

Interest Category:

Title:

Author:

Type of Reading Material:

Interest Category: